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A Q-SORT ANALYSIS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE IN COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

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DESCRIPTORS- *SUPERINTENDENT ROLE, *SCHOOL DISTRICTS, *Q SORT, *COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION, *TEACHER ATTITUDES, RURAL SCHOOLS, URBAN SCHOOLS, BOARDS OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS, IOWA CITY, IOWA,

THIS STUDY INVESTIGATES THE AMOUNT OF AGREEMENT EXISTING BETWEEN SUPERINTENDENTS, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, AND TEACHERS FROM RURAL, URBAN, AND CENTRAL CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS CONCERNING THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN THE COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION PROCESS. TWENTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY. THESE DISTRICTS WERE DIVIDED INTO CATEGORIES OF CENTRAL CITY (GREATER THAN 50,000 INHABITANTS), URBAN (2,500-50,000 INHABITANTS), AND RURAL (LESS THAN 2,500 INHABITANTS). TWENTY SUPERINTENDENTS, 20 BOARD MEMBERS, AND 40 TEACHERS IN THESE DISTRICTS WERE ASKED TO SORT A 60-STATEMENT DECK OF Q-SORT ITEMS. EACH RESPONDENT WAS ASKED TO PLACE, IN RANK ORDER, HIS RESPONSES TO THE 60 STATEMENTS RELATING THE SUPERINTENDENT TO HIS ROLE IN COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS AND TO THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS. TWO GROUPS WERE IDENTIFIED--FACTOR A, THOSE FROM URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND FACTOR B, THOSE FROM CENTRAL CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS. FACTOR A WAS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPING A QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND UNDECIDED ABOUT THE TEACHERS' ORGANIZATION BEING A MECHANISM TO ACCOMPLISH IMPROVEMENTS IN WORKING CONDITIONS. THE FACTOR B GROUP INDICATED A GREATER PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE MORE CRUCIAL ISSUES AND COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION PROCESS, AND WAS WILLING TO TAKE A STAND ON IMPORTANT ASPECTS IN THE COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATION PROCESS. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN THE "RESEARCH DIGEST," NUMBER 31, JANUARY, 1968. (HW)

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THE IOWA CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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CENTRAL PROBLEM AND SUB-PROBLEMS

This study investigated the role of the superintendent in various phases of the collective negotiations process. Four prominent educational organizations are in disagreement concerning the superintendent's role in the negotiation process between the school board and the teachers' organization. The American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, National School Board Association, and American Association of School Administrators assign the superintendent divergent responsibilities in the many facets of the negotiation process. The roll of the superintendent, traditionally acting as the official spokesman for the teachers to the school board, as well as the well as the interpreter of the board's desires to the professional staff, is now being questioned by teachers, school administrators and Boards. Teachers' demands for increased participation and recognition in the educational process have activated the need for formal negotiation agreements between the school board and the teachers' organization. This negotiation process affects relationships and functions that have previously existed between the superintendent, school board, and teachers.

Specifically this study investigated the amount of agreement existing between superintendents, school board members, and teachers from rural, urban, and central city school districts concerning the role of the superintendent in the negotiation process as defined by interpretation of the policy statements of the AASA, NSBA, NEA, and AFT. The study also compares the role of the superintendent as perceived by teachers, school board members, and superintendents when compared with the policy statements of the NEA, AFT, AASA, and NSBA.

The specific questions investigated in this study were:

1. How do school board members, teachers, and superintendents from rural school districts differ concerning the role of the superintendent in the collective negotiation process?

2. Same question as # 1 above directed to urban school districts.

3. Same question as # 1 above directed to central city school districts.

The following research hypotheses were tested by a factor analysis of Q-sort responses:

1. There is no significant discrepancy in responses of school board members, teachers, and superintendents from rural districts concerning the scope and structure in collective negotiations.

2. Same as # 1 hypothesis above - applied to urban schools.

3. Same as # 1 hypothesis above - applied to central city schools.

The key variable in the negotiation process appeared to be the role assigned to the superintendent. The NSBA and the AASA have recommended a study of teacher, superintendent, school board relationships as they pertain to the collective action of teachers negotiating with school boards. The NEA is urging local associations to join with state associations to work for state legislation that will legalize and define professional negotiation procedures between local teacher associations and school boards.

As a result this study was designed to investigate attitudes as they pertain to the role of the superintendent in the negotiation process and to compare the amount of agreement that exists.

METHOD

The author of this study contacted the superintendent of twenty-one selected school districts in Iowa and asked about their willingness to participate and be involved in the following four tasks:

1. Based upon your opinion, sort a deck of Q-sort items of sixty statements that relate to the topic under study.

2. Complete a personal data sheet regarding experience, age, etc.

3. Participate in the selection of two teachers and one school board member according to a random selection procedure, established by the investigator.

4. Contact these two teachers and one board member to ask whether they would be willing to sort a Q-deck of sixty items that pertain to the topic of collective negotiations and fill out a very short personal data form. Finally, establish a schedule mutually convenient to the respondents and the researcher.

Twenty of the twenty-one districts contacted agreed to participate. School districts were divided into categories of central city, urban, and rural. A central city school district was defined as one having a population of 50,000 or more inhabitants living within the boundaries of the district. An urban district was defined as one being on the fringe area of a central city with incorporated places containing 2,500 or more inhabitants. A rural school district was classified as being within incorporated places with less than 2,500 inhabitants residing in the school district.

The researcher visited twenty school districts and administered the Q-sort deck to twenty superintendents, twenty board members, and forty teachers. The average time taken by each respondent to sort the sixty items amounted to approximately forty-five minutes. Each respondent was asked to place, in a rank order, his responses to sixty statements relating to the role of the superintendent in collective negotiations and to the scope and structure of the negotiation process. The rank order placement of responses

had a range one to nine, with a "most disagree" rank of one to a "most agree" rank of nine. In this Q-sort continuum a specific number of responses was required in each category of one through nine. Three examples of the sixty Q-sort statements are given here:

4. The NEA and AFT probably have more areas of agreement than disagreement.

14. The superintendent should attempt to prove to the school board that teachers' organizations will benefit the teachers in his school district.

48. The superintendent should be the one who is primarily responsible for actually expressing the demands of the teachers to the school board.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the data gathered by the Q-sort instrument provided two significant types of people. In this study the two groups are identified as factor A and factor B.

Factor A consisted mainly of superintendents, school board members, and teachers from urban and rural school districts. Factor B was composed of superintendents, board members, and teachers from central city school districts.

Factor A.

This group indicated concern about seeking an atmosphere of cooperation between school board members, teachers, and superintendents through informal personal relationships.

This group believed that teachers should be concerned with quality education, but at the same time limiting the effectiveness of teachers' organizations by placing restrictions on their involvement in the decision-making process related to the educational program.

Urban and rural school personnel considered the superintendent to be the educational leader and the best qualified to determine the best educational program for the district. This group does not accept the viewpoint that collective negotiation is a national phenomnon in education. They felt that the different kinds of personnel in the school district were able to settle their differences among themselves, using locally developed and accepted procedures more suitable to their specific situation.

Type A rejected the principal of exclusive recognition and the need for a third party in the event of an impasse procedure. Also strongly rejected were strikes and sanctions as methods of settling disputes.

The superintendent was viewed as an interpreter of teacher concerns to the school board and responsibilities and concerns of the school board to the teachers. While

teachers' salaries were being considered the superintendent was not a welcome member of the teachers' association.

In summary, personnel from urban schools closely identified with personnel from rural districts rather than with personnel from central city districts. This group was reluctant to accept the responsibility for developing a quality educational program and undecided about the teachers' organization being the mechanism to accomplish improvements in the condition of work. They strongly accepted traditional values in education and viewed the work force in the school as being a very cohesive group. Type A responded to the needs of the school by informal methods of behavior.

Factor B

Factor B was composed of superintendents, board members, and teachers from central city school districts. This group was more willing to recognize the collective negotiation process as a technique of sharing responsibility in the decision-making process. They felt that teachers should have the right to bargain collectively with the school board. They believed that exclusive recognition should be granted to the teachers' group winning the majority vote in a representative election. They also accepted the viewpoint that teacher advisory groups are beneficial to the decision-making process.

Type B showed agreement with Type A regarding the role of the superintendent in collective negotiation as being that of a channel and interpreter to both groups. The superintendent was looked to as one who should be proficient in maintaining a good public relations program. He should have the ability to communicate effectively and bring the teachers and school board together in the negotiation process.

Type B, like Type A, objected to the use of strikes as a method of settling disputes.

Type B personnel considered teachers, school board members, and administrative personnel as having mutually acceptable goals and interests and that one professional organization should include all members of the professional staff.

In summary, type B personnel indicated a greater perception and understanding about the more crucial issues and collective negotiation process. They were more willing to take a stand on important aspects in the collective negotiation process. Type B allocated a definite responsibility to the teachers' organizations in determining the educational program.

CONCLUSIONS

1. School board members, teachers, and superintendents from rural school school districts did not differ concerning the role of the superintendent in the collective negotiation process.

2. School board members, teachers, and superintendents from urban school districts did not differ concerning the role of the superintendent in the collective negotiation process.

3. School board members, teachers, and superintendents from central city districts did not differ concerning the role of the superintendent in the collective negotiation process.

4. School personnel from rural and urban school districts had important differences in attitude when compared to school personnel from central city school districts concerning the role of the superintendent in collective negotiations and the scope and structure of the collective negotiation process.

Even though considerable differences were noted in comparing Factor A and Factor B personnel and attitudes it should be pointed out that there was also considerable agreement concerning the role of the superintendent in collective negotiations and the scope of the collective negotiation process. This suggests there is still a measurable amount of solidarity among educational personnel. Major differences appeared to be concerned more with technical and procedural matters rather than in terms of over-all purpose.

IMPLICATIONS

1. One of the results of collective negotiations has been the loss of power by building principa'ls. Because of this, studies should be conducted to determine the emerging role of the principalship in the collective negotiations process.

2. To assist school personnel in gaining skills and concepts about collective negotiations materials should be developed that will describe, demonstrate, and involve school personnel in the collective negotiation process.

3. One result of collective negotiations in public education has been the increase in teacher salaries. As salaries increase the single salary schedule may may become a detriment to the ability of the school board to compete for teachers with certain types of skills. Continuous evaluation should be given to the development of a salary schedule that recognizes skill differentials among professional employees.

4. A study similar to this one should be conducted in the next three to five years. Attitudes and perceptions of school personnel will change as they become sophisticated about the skills and concepts of collective negotiations. It would be beneficial to determine the degree of attitude change as well as the direction of this change.

5. Increasing intensity of the superintendent's role calls for a re-evaluation of the roles of the central office administrative staff. New staff roles must be developed to aid the chief school administrator. Research is needed to determine needed modifications to central office administrative arrangements that will offer assistance to the superintendent.